

Adding a Worship Service at Church

THINK MISSION! Be sure all of the thinking and explaining and praying is about the clear mission of the church. The Great Commission.

THE QUESTION IS WHAT IS BEST! What is best for outreach and mission, not what is comfortable for the church staff. Many decisions are made or squelched by busy people who are too busy but do not think mission, and are not thinking outreach.

BELIEVE THE EXPERTS! They still say that if a service is 75-80% full (or looks that way), it will begin to decline. Many add that if it stays that full for two years, it will not grow again.

SURVEYS MAY HELP, BUT ONLY A LITTLE! Many members or attenders will think about the questions about five minutes, when leaders, especially senior people, have been thinking and worrying and praying for a long time.

DO NOT REINVENT A WHEEL! Check with churches that have done this well!

PREPARE FOR A LONG HAUL! Teams need to be in place so that the start is strong. And most who study new services say they should not be evaluated as to success for 14-18 months! Trends and traditions take time!

PEOPLE HATE CHANGES AND SURPRISES! So any planning should be leaked and any new plans also. “Someday we will probably have to add another service” – said several times more than a year ahead. “When we go to three services this fall...” (sometime early spring).

CHOOSE THE TIME AND DAY WITH GREAT CARE! In most climates, the prize time for starting is between 9:00 am and 11:00 am on Sunday. In some settings, Saturday evening is so appropriate – for people who work Sunday, for lapsed Catholics who once were in the habit of Saturdays, for better outreach to people who love to sleep in on Sundays and always have.

SHUFFLE TIMES OF OTHER SERVICES WHEN YOU START! If you have one service at the prime time of 10:30, you still might call attention to the addition and make it easier to move to the new service if you moved to 9:15 and 10:45 or 9:30 and 11:00. And consider tightening up present services. Many at 80 minutes could be just as effective at 70 minutes! Sometimes there are five minutes of palaver!

RUN COMMUNITY GROUPS AND CHILD CARE AND TEACHING TIMES FOR THE NEW SERVICE! The Saturday time may be the exception for some of these. And the simultaneous plan (worship and CE all hours) is so much better than the sandwich plan (worship, then CE, then worship).

MAKE IT VARSITY! Any additional services must be done as well as the varsity services that grew to the point the new one is needed. We cannot just slap on another service. “Dance with who brought you to the dance”—the other services grew because the leadership was strong. (God’s grace first, okay; but you know.)

RECRUIT A “MASS” OF PEOPLE WHO WILL MAKE IT THEIRS! If it is an awkward time, you may only be able to ask them to support it as a mission of their own, to make more room at the growing times, for six or nine months or a year. We started a fifth service at 5:30 pm Sunday, and asked 20% of our people to make it their own for a year. They did. (About a third of them returned to the morning as soon as the year was up.) It will not work to have people “try it” or attend Saturday evening, for instance, and still be loyal to Sunday morning – if the new service is indeed Saturday.

TEST IT TO SHOW IT CAN WORK! Provide an extra service Easter and Mothers Day, with good teams for all ministries in place. Some people will think it is impossible. Often they “tried it before” and have a bad taste. This “trial run” can work well.

START AT THE BEST MONTH! No one would start a new service in February of course. Usually the start of the church year, September, is best.

GET ALL THE TEAMS IN PLACE! Worship leaders, ushers, teachers, nursery. This means recruit time and prep time, and a team of “captains” recruited way ahead.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE! With summary news way ahead, and details months ahead, and emotion, emotion, mission, mission!

CELEBRATE AS IT STARTS AND WHAT ITS MISSION IS! My favorite church coach, Lyle Schaller, often says, “Churches do not celebrate enough!”

PRAY ALL THE WAY! As you decide and as you present the news and as you start!

THINK AND PRAY MISSION AGAIN! In private and with staff and volunteer teams and in the services.